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CONGRESSIONAL TRAVEL AND TOURISM CAUCUS  
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CONGRESSIONAL CAUCUS FOR WOMEN'S ISSUES



**CONGRESSMAN ROB SIMMONS**  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
SECOND DISTRICT, CONNECTICUT

ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON PROJECTION FORCES  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
TACTICAL AIR AND LAND FORCES

TRANSPORTATION AND  
INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON RAILROADS  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HIGHWAYS AND TRANSIT  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON COAST GUARD AND  
MARITIME TRANSPORTATION

VETERANS' AFFAIRS COMMITTEE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HEALTH  
CHAIRMAN

April 7, 2004

The Honorable Harold Rogers  
Chairman  
Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security  
B-307 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

As you begin to craft the fiscal year 2005 Homeland Security appropriations bill, I ask that you provide funding for the "Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response Act," or SAFER Act.

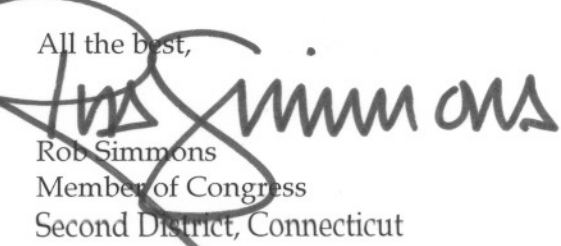
Last year, in show of bipartisan support for our Nation's fire fighters, Congress enacted the SAFER Act to provide the necessary funds to hire up to 75,000 new fire fighters over seven years, recruit and retain volunteer fire fighters, and bring relief to the thousands of fire stations across the country that are currently operating short of staff.

Two-thirds of all professional and volunteer fire departments in our Nation, located in both large cities and small towns, do not have sufficient personnel to adequately protect the public. In addition, many local governments are currently facing budget shortfalls and are unable to hire additional fire fighters even though public safety is clearly at risk.

Although Congress has increased spending on first responder needs in the wake of the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks, no federal funding has been allocated to address the critical staffing shortage in the fire service. Under the SAFER Act, fire departments throughout the country will be able to apply for grants to fill the fire fighter shortage. The grant program, once funded, will enable fire departments to receive federal grants to hire and pay new fire fighters for five years. Under the program, the federal grant decreases annually on a sliding scale in order to promote complete local self-sufficiency after four years. In addition, grants will be awarded to state and local organizations to recruit and retain volunteer fire fighters.

The federal government already provides funds for training and equipment to fire stations throughout the country. However, without adequate fire fighters, training and equipment money will be ineffectual. We saw on September 11<sup>th</sup> when the country is under attack, or during a natural disaster, fire fighters are the first to respond. Congress spoke when it authorized the SAFER Act. I urge you to fulfill the promise made last year to the Nation's fire fighters by providing the necessary funding.

All the best,

  
Rob Simmons  
Member of Congress  
Second District, Connecticut

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Dear Mr. Chairman:

As you begin to craft the fiscal year 2005 Homeland Security appropriations bill, I ask that you provide full funding (\$750 million) for the Assistance to Firefighters grant program (FIRE Act).

As you know, America's first line of defense in any terrorist attack is the "first responder" community - local police, firefighters, and emergency medical professionals. If properly equipped and trained, local first responders have the greatest potential to save lives and limit casualties after a terrorist attack.

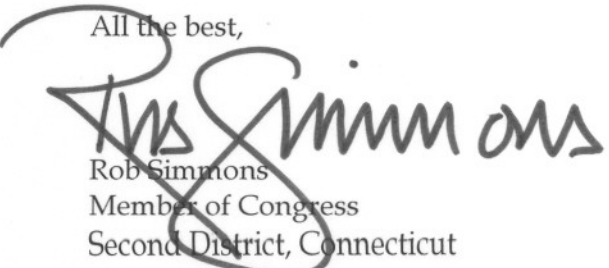
Currently, eastern Connecticut's capabilities for responding to a terrorist attack in either New York or Boston vary widely. Home to a U.S. Naval Submarine Base, U.S. Coast Guard Research Center and the USCG Academy, two major airports, five nuclear reactors, a major pharmaceutical global research center and a major East Coast shipping port, no other district between New York and Boston contains such a combination of sensitive assets.

Yet many areas throughout my district have little or no capability to respond to terrorist attack. Even the best-prepared localities do not possess adequate resources to respond to the full range of terrorist threats we face. But thanks to the FIRE Act, this is changing.

Since July 2003, 48 fire departments in Connecticut's Second District have received more than \$4.7 million to support their role as first responders in the neighborhoods and communities they serve. These funds will allow eastern Connecticut's first responders to be trained and equipped to save lives in the event of a terrorist attack.

It is my understanding that President Bush has only requested \$500 million for the FIRE Act. I urge that you reject this and ask that you provide the full \$750 million for the FIRE Act. Thank you for considering this homeland security request.

All the best,

  
Rob Simmons  
Member of Congress  
Second District, Connecticut

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